

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, January 31, 2007

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## LOSING ISAAC: Reform system to save children

January 31, 2007

Until Michigan can protect children like Isaac Lethbridge, any talk of being a child-friendly state is mere talk.

No, Michigan did not beat or burn Isaac, nor break his collarbone. But loopholes in state policy, years of budget cuts and limp protection standards for children in foster care are equal culprits. The end result: 18,660 children who are vulnerable to the very types of abuse the system is supposed to spare them.

This week's Free Press series on Isaac's death illuminates the deadly byproducts of the blind eye Michigan has paid to its overburdened system. Isaac, 2 1/2 , was the third child under state care to die in the last 18 months.

Even with nearly a billion-dollar deficit, these human costs are too expensive. Michigan must undertake some maddeningly obvious reforms before a court steps in. Few will be free, but they are necessary to close the cracks before they swallow another bright-eyed child's life.

Some steps to start:

- **ACCREDITATION:** The state should push for accreditation of the 500 public and private agencies involved in managing care for foster children. Even stricter than the federal requirement of licensing for care, this would bring much needed accountability to the system, giving agencies and caseworkers a clear set of guidelines for monitoring care -- or risking the loss of their accreditation and jobs.
- **SMARTER USE OF WORKERS:** The state assigns dozens of workers to monitor case files to make sure agencies meet state laws. It would be more efficient to assign them, in SWAT team fashion, to complaints so that everyone knows what's under investigation and what's being done about it. This could help caseworkers with their loads as well.
- **PSYCH EVALUATIONS:** Now, the state puts potential caregivers and foster parents through criminal background checks and makes sure they don't appear on the state registry of people with histories of child mistreatment. Psychological tests, which cost at least \$200 apiece, would help better judge the fitness level of people the state asks to care for its children.

These efforts are the least of what Michigan owes Isaac Lethbridge and the thousands of other children dependent on its broken system.



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## How many chances do parents get?

January 31, 2007

BY BRIAN DICKERSON

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

If you commit a felony with a firearm in Michigan, you lose the right to carry one.

If you molest a child, you can't go within 1,000 feet of a school.

So under what rational theory of justice are Matt and Jennifer Lethbridge -- who lost nine previous children to the foster care system after neglecting them -- entitled to go on having babies indefinitely?

For the last three days, Free Press readers have been transfixed by the story of the Lethbridges' eighth child, Isaac, who died in a Detroit foster home last August after being beaten and burned. He was 2 years old.

In a series that concluded Tuesday (go to [www.freep.com](http://www.freep.com) and click on "Losing Isaac"), Free Press staff writers Ruby L. Bailey, Jack Kresnak and Tina Lam documented Isaac's horrific journey from a filthy, unheated home in Wisconsin (where his parents had fled to escape the scrutiny of child protection workers in Michigan and Ohio) to the overcrowded foster home where EMS workers found him dead.

### State of neglect

"Losing Isaac" describes an overburdened, criminally underfunded child welfare system that has ceased to protect the children in its care from even the most egregious threats to their physical well-being.

The story of Isaac's death begs us to question whether a state that allows its most vulnerable citizens to endure such chronic neglect can call itself civilized.

Still -- after all the bureaucratic bumbling, regulatory dereliction and outrageous indifference so methodically exposed by the Free Press' series -- what really set my teeth on edge was the news that Jennifer Lethbridge, who has served jail time for child neglect and forfeited nine previous children to the state's foster care system, is now pregnant with her 10th.

How many of the Lethbridges' children are Michigan taxpayers morally obligated to feed, clothe and care for before the couple's right to procreate is challenged? Twelve? Twenty-four?

### A right without limits?

Courts have been understandably reluctant to mandate sterilization or birth control for even the most demonstrably abusive parents -- and no one should lightly dismiss the hazards such a precedent could unleash.

Still, why should a society that doesn't hesitate to seize a negligent mother's children once they're born consider her right to bear them inviolable?

Tuesday, Matt Lethbridge told me he and his wife deserve an opportunity to prove they can be responsible parents.

"People say we can't accept responsibility. But my wife spent 45 days in jail, and I didn't fight" the neglect charges, he said. "We've paid for our mistakes, and we've changed our ways."

The Lethbridges are still fighting for reunification with their two youngest children. If that effort fails, Matt Lethbridge says, they'll likely lose custody of their unborn baby, too -- "and we won't try any more after that."



## Work to assure greater responsibility from parents

January 31, 2007

My worst fears were confirmed when I read Jennifer Lethbridge is pregnant with her 10th child. This is outrageous.

The media's attention is misplaced in the death of Isaac Lethbridge. We should be focusing on the root causes of the problem, which are society and the biological parents.

Why does the foster care system exist in the first place? Because too many people conceive children they can't take care of and we (society, you and me) don't do enough to prevent that. If we focused on how to prevent children from entering the system in the first place, we wouldn't have to put so much effort into fixing it. Also, the foster care system can't properly care for the kids because it is overwhelmed and underfunded. Again, we can be blamed for that.

This is what we could have and should have done to prevent Isaac's death:

- Have a comprehensive program of sex education that discusses more than abstinence. We need to educate people on the use of birth control.
- Provide funding for birth control and improve access to birth control.
- Classes on parenting skills and life skills should be mandatory in high school. Also, people need to be educated on the realities of parenthood, how to prepare for parenthood, and how to decide if and when becoming a parent is a responsible choice for them.
- We currently have an anything-goes attitude toward conceiving children. That needs to stop. The most important thing prospective parents need to ask themselves is whether or not they can fulfill their obligations to the child and society to care for the child properly.
- A social worker's assessment should be required for both parents before and/or during a pregnancy to make sure they are prepared for parenthood.
- Prospective parents should be required to take a vow of commitment to their child before they become parents. This is required to get married, and parenting should be no different.
- For those who adopt or foster children, prospective parents should be required to prove their fitness for parenthood before the child enters their home.
- Finally, talk is cheap. If you are really serious about helping to prevent abuse and neglect, you should support a tax increase to fund programs to help with all the above mentioned issues. You should become a foster parent.

**Linda Kingston**  
*Farmington Hills*

### **Make this the last such case**

Abuse like the kind Isaac went through is not acceptable. If Gov. Jennifer Granholm wants to prove she deserves a second term, this should be her first priority, to stop such abuse in Michigan, not jobs or helping people sell their homes.

Let's make this the No. 1 priority and make this little boy's horrific short life the last we see printed in any Michigan newspaper.

**Robert Denstedt**  
*Canton*

### **Three strikes, no more kids**

Why haven't the parents of Isaac Lethbridge been permanently sterilized? They've shown repeatedly that they're incapable of responsible parenting. They've been incapable 10 times of preventing pregnancy. Why not have a "three strikes, you're out" law in cases like this, with the sentence being mandatory sterilization for both parents?

**Christine Danner**  
*Port Huron*

### **Many share blame**

My heart aches for little Isaac Lethbridge and every other innocent at risk in a child welfare system so overwhelmed. Everyone who was ever involved with this little boy is to blame -- all the way back to his parents.

Nine children became wards of the state because the biological parents could not care for them. Seems to me that these people's right to procreate children should have been terminated.

**Elizabeth A. Kasprzak**  
*Dearborn*

### **Shared responsibility**

As a future social worker, I am especially struck by how this tragic case illustrates policy flaws in our child welfare system. Though the child protective services agency in Michigan has made strides in accomplishing a safer environment for most children in the system, it is still surviving on substandard means, given its extremely limited budget. It's interesting how as a society we despair at how Isaac was treated but fail to look at the macro-level problems that led to this boy's death.

Our society needs to take our child welfare system more seriously.

**Meridith J. Cervenak**  
*Rochester*

### **Think prevention**

So many people failed that innocent little boy. Most of all, the foster-care mother who was ultimately responsible for him, yet claims to have done nothing wrong.

I understand the state child welfare system is overly burdened in tough economic times. But it is just mind-boggling that the state will place children in foster-care settings that are more dangerous than the ones they are being removed from.

Unless these children who have no voice are paid more attention, and funding found to adequately staff the state child welfare system, I fear Isaac will not be the last young child found severely abused or dead.

**Vida McAndrew**  
*West Bloomfield*

### **Irresponsible family planning**

Jennifer and Matthew Lethbridge have nine children, all taken from them for neglect, and they are expecting a 10th. What a stunning example of irresponsibility!

With her own words, Mrs. Lethbridge admits: "We didn't understand completely what it takes to be good parents." She and her husband apparently don't understand responsible family planning either.

I have four words for them to consider: contraception, vasectomy, tubal ligation.

**Bernie R. Klein**  
*Ann Arbor*

### **Another child in foster care?**

It's difficult to read about how badly this child was treated in the foster care system. It seems too easy to become a foster parent, and I'm not sure why some of these adults are interested in becoming foster parents.

What I find truly sad is how this couple continues to have children. It's inevitable that this new child, too, will be removed from his or her home and put into foster care. It will be a travesty if the couple is awarded any money from a lawsuit, because they are partly responsible for Isaac's death.

**Lisa Ross**  
*Beverly Hills*

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The sorrowful truth is that that'd be just fine with most people.

Contact **BRIAN DICKERSON** at 248-351-3697 or [bdickerson@freepress.com](mailto:bdickerson@freepress.com).

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Published January 31, 2007

## 911 call details mom, friend attempting to revive infant

13-month-old had no pulse in ambulance

By Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

### Trial to continue

- Testimony continues Thursday in the trial of Steve Lee Moy, who is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of his 13-month-old stepdaughter. The trial, before Chief Judge William Collette, is being held at the Ingham County Courthouse in Mason.

MASON - As Loretta Moy relayed instructions from a 911 operator, LaToya Donald frantically tried to revive Moy's 13-month-old daughter.

Pinch the child's nose and breathe into her mouth, then push down in the center of her chest five times quickly, Moy told Donald, 27.

"Is she breathing?" the operator asked at one point.

But Anishia was not breathing. She likely was already dead.

The Aug. 2, 2006 call was played Tuesday during the trial of Steve Lee Moy, who is accused of killing his stepdaughter that day.

Moy, 39, is charged with murder and child abuse; he could face life in prison if convicted.

Witnesses testified the Lansing man was alone in the Pontiac Street house that day caring for Anishia while his wife, Loretta, was at a laundromat.

At the time, the Moys were living with Donald and her husband, sleeping on couch pillows on the living room floor.

Moy's attorney, Roderick Porter, has said his client was not at the house that afternoon, and that someone else killed the child.

Moy told doctors, police and his wife that the child fell off a couch, according to testimony.

When Lansing firefighter-paramedic Chris Wheeler arrived at the house at about 5 p.m., another firefighter was running out of the house with Anishia in his arms, Wheeler testified.

Inside the ambulance, Wheeler performed CPR on a child who did not have a pulse or heartbeat.

Anishia died from multiple internal injuries caused by blunt force trauma as well as possible suffocation, the forensic pathologist who performed the autopsy testified Tuesday.

Five broken ribs, a torn liver and a severely bruised spleen were all injuries that had occurred near the time of death, Dr. Brian Hunter said.

"They happened in rapid succession," he told Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino.

A tear of the skin connecting her upper lip to her gum could indicate a hand was held over her mouth, Hunter said.

Hunter also said he found 33 bruises on the child's body, as well as broken bones in her arm and wrist that had healed.

Porter focused on the old or healed injuries Hunter found.

A Lansing police officer who saw Anishia at the hospital told Porter he saw obvious bruises, as well as a bite mark on the child's cheek.

Loretta Moy has said her daughter did not have any bruises when she bathed her the day before her death.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or [kgrasha@lsj.com](mailto:kgrasha@lsj.com).

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## Girl's death blamed on old injury

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- A forensic pathologist has blamed a 6-year-old girl's recent death on brain injury she suffered as an infant.

Cinceria Trevino, daughter of Isaac Trevino and Nicole Haugen, died Jan. 7 on a weekend visit with her father. As a 6-month-old, she suffered brain damage when her father accidentally rolled on top of her on the couch.

"I believe she died as a consequence of her experience five years ago (when) she had severe damage to the brain from lack of oxygen ... as a result of her near-suffocation," Dr. Stephen Cohle, a forensic pathologist, said Tuesday.

Grand Rapids police were investigating the death. Kent County Prosecutor William Forsyth said his office would review reports once the investigation is complete.

Trevino had pleaded no contest to second-degree child abuse for his daughter's injuries, and was sentenced in 2004.

The ruling gave hope to Haugen and her fiancé, Gary Jeffries, that her son, Isaac Jr., 11, and their daughter, Zoe, 4, would soon return home. He said officials have indicated that would be the case if the autopsy showed no problems with their care of the girl.

The boy has been in foster care, while their daughter was staying with an aunt.

Jeffries said Cinceria had a short, rough life but she was shown plenty of love.

"She was a fighter," he said. "She wanted to live, and for six years, she did."

He said his young family has struggled financially, with the unexpected cost of a funeral and hiring an attorney.

The children, who couldn't attend the funeral, are traumatized, Jeffries said.

"Basically, we're trying to put back what pieces that's left," he said.

A hearing is set for next month to determine whether three children living with Isaac Trevino and Misty Bard-Trevino should remain in foster care as court wards.

A protective-services worker wrote that "Misty Bard-Trevino and Isaac Trevino have demonstrated a pattern of chronic inability to maintain a safe and sanitary home environment for their children despite the implementation of numerous, intensive, home-based services."

Send e-mail to the author: [jagar@grpress.com](mailto:jagar@grpress.com)



## Online predators must go to prison, prosecutor says

Smith says plea bargains too often result in only jail time

PUBLISHED: January 31, 2007

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Online child predators who want to reach a plea deal with prosecutors in Macomb County courts now must agree to spend at least one year in state prison, or take their case to trial.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said Tuesday he toughened his office's policy at the start of the new year because too many offenders who plead guilty to arranging for sex with a minor over the Internet have received jail time, meaning one year or less in the Macomb County Jail.

"These guys who are stalking our children online need to get the message, and giving them a prison term sends that message," Smith said Tuesday.

Typically, offenders with little or no prior record have been offered to plead guilty to a 20-year felony in exchange for dropping related lesser offenses. State sentencing guidelines recommend penalties that can include jail time or prison time, roughly 10 to 20 months, with anything under 12 months served in jail in Mount Clemens.

Smith stopped short of criticizing judges but said: "I don't know if we have exceptionally persuasive defense attorneys or what, but every case seems to be ending up with county jail time."

Despite excessive publicity of sting operations conducted by many law enforcement agencies -- such as the Macomb Area Computer Enforcement team and police agencies working with the "Dateline" TV show on NBC -- men continue to solicit boys and girls under age 16 for sex in online chat rooms.

"Nothing is deterring these pedophiles," Smith said. "Everywhere you go you hear about these. You turn on the TV and 'Dateline' is busting them.

"Hopefully, the end result will be that they will see all of them going to prison. Maybe that will deter them."

Defense attorney Steven Rabaut, who is representing or has represented about one dozen online-predator defendants, criticized the new stance, saying county jail is a better place for offenders than the state prison system because in jail they can be ordered to immediately undergo psychological counseling through a private agency. In prison, sex offenders often must wait months or years to receive treatment, he said.

Smith, chief of the office's sex-crime unit before he was elected in 2004, countered that studies show pedophiles rarely overcome their sexual desire for youths. Prison provides public protection, he said.

"The only safe sex offender is behind bars," he said.

He said he is concerned that the online predators could be involved with other illegal activity involving children.

Assistant Macomb prosecutor William Harding, chief of the computer crime unit, which prosecutes online predator cases, noted the severity of the crime that the culprits are intending to commit -- third-degree criminal sexual conduct, which carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

It is believed that no online predator case in Macomb County has gone to trial. But that could change, according to Rabaut. He said he expects more of his clients to start fighting the charges. He said defense attorneys can raise questions about the investigative steps taken by police.

"They have burdens they have to meet," he said.

The issue of potential entrapment by police has been discussed by defense attorneys, but no case has progressed to higher courts in Michigan. Undercover officers, Rabaut said, are careful to ensure that the suspect initiates the talk of sexual activity.

"They (police) put they bait out there, and these guys are biting," Rabaut said.

Computer crime units have been formed throughout the nation to catch adults trying to lure youngsters for sex. Typically, undercover officers pose as a boy or girl from age 13 to 15 and engage in chat-room conversations with pedophiles. The age of sexual consent in Michigan is 16.

MACE, formed in 2001 in Chesterfield Township and now based in Clinton Township, has arrested more than 50 men trying to arrange for sex with a minor. The unit has increased the number of officers working undercover. A reserve unit was even formed to help with the high number of cases.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel has said that undercover officers with little effort can attract adults seeking sex with a minor. "It's like shooting fish in a barrel," Hackel has said of the predator suspects.

"Dateline" has broadcast several episodes showing predators caught in the act.

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# What's deal with Abraham? Legislature Lawmaker calls for hearing to find out

*January 31, 2007*

BY FRANK WITSIL  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A state representative from Clinton Township called Tuesday for a special hearing to investigate what -- if any -- promises were made to Nathaniel Abraham by government officials to pay for housing and college tuition upon his release from state custody after almost a decade.

Meanwhile, Abraham's attorney Daniel Bagdade said that the state is reneging on agreements it made.

Kim Meltzer, a Republican, said she wants the House Committee on Oversight and Investigations to hold the hearing to "get to the bottom" of accusations swirling around "alleged promises made to Abraham upon his release."

She said as many as a dozen constituents have asked her questions about what the state is paying for and that the call for the hearing is not politically motivated.

"I'm trying to find the answers," she said.

Bagdade said he is pleased that Meltzer is seeking an investigation. He said he talked to Abraham on Tuesday and that his client told him he was expecting to be reimbursed for \$1,000 he spent on an apartment deposit, rent and household necessities in Bay City.

"He's very upset they made promises to him and they are reneging," Bagdade said.

Abraham, 21, was freed Jan. 18 from a Bay City halfway house, where he served the last six months of a sentence for killing 18-year-old Ronnie Greene Jr. in 1997. Abraham, who was 11 at the time, is the youngest person in Michigan to be charged as an adult with murder.

Department of Human Services spokeswoman Karen Stock has denied that the state gave Abraham a two-year commitment for services, and said that Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley "misinformed the public" about what support Abraham would get. Carley did not return a phone call from the Free Press on Tuesday. Bagdade said he recalled that state officials discussed at a Jan. 8 meeting in Bloomfield Hills what the state would offer Abraham. Bagdade said no promises were made in writing and that he did not take notes -- but that he was under the impression the state would provide money for housing and education.

Contact **FRANK WITSIL** at [witsil@freepress.com](mailto:witsil@freepress.com).

**COMMENTS** 

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**ssutton0915**

According to Abraham's attorney, "He's very upset they made promises to him and they are renegeing."

Meanwhile, Ronnie Greene, Jr. was unavailable for comment.

*Posted: Wed Jan 31, 2007 7:30 am*

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**Richard**

It seems that if one wants a college education, just kill someone and the DHS rewards you with housing and college tuition? In this case DHS has the balls to take children away at a whim, but DHS coddles killer criminals. I have got it! Lets just combine the two, the DHS when they take children out and put them in low income foster homes, give the address to former criminal murders and tell them to have at it with foster children. Kill off the fostered children and reward the killer criminal with housing and college tuition as a reward for their service to the state. This way DHS (which by the by hates children, in reality) kils two birds with one stone. DHS gets rid of thrash children. Keeps the killer career criminal in practice.

I knew there was a connection here that the state would come to a compromise. Sounds like a plan to me. Plausible deniability (DHS loves that)!

*Posted: Wed Jan 31, 2007 7:15 am*

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January 31, 2007

## Rep seeks probe on state's plan for Abraham

Clinton Twp. lawmaker wants to know whether free rent, tuition promised.

**Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News**

**LANSING** -- A state representative from Macomb County has asked for a special hearing into whether state bureaucrats made promises of free rent and free tuition to convicted murderer Nathaniel Abraham.

Rep. Kim Meltzer, R-Clinton Township, issued a letter Tuesday to Speaker Andy Dillon requesting that the House Committee on Oversight and Investigations hold a special hearing to investigate what promises, if any, were made by officials with the state Department of Human Services.

Abraham, 21, was released from state custody Jan. 18 after serving nearly 10 years in juvenile detention for second-degree murder.

Deborah Carley, chief deputy prosecutor with Oakland County, told The Detroit News on Jan. 18 that state caseworkers informed her and others that Abraham would be getting two years of free rent in a furnished Bay City apartment and would be eligible for up to four years of free college tuition through a Foster Care Demonstration pilot program intended for youths phasing out of foster care because of their age.

The same day, Human Services officials said they had provided Abraham with a security deposit and first month's rent through an emergency services program. The next day, after a public outcry about the plan, state officials told The News they were mistaken and said Abraham was considered for the foster care program but deemed ineligible.

Carley and Abraham's defense lawyer, Daniel Bagdade, maintain the state's plan for Abraham was a "done deal" and they were never notified of a change.

In a response e-mailed to The News, DHS spokeswoman Karen Stock said if asked, DHS workers would be "happy" to appear before the committee and "explain."

*You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or [jchambers@detnews.com](mailto:jchambers@detnews.com).*

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## Cervical cancer vaccine daunting for uninsured

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

**MICHAEL GREENLEE**

**THE SAGINAW NEWS**

Young, uninsured women seeking the new cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil may discover their physicians cannot help.

The human papillomavirus or HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted viruses. The vaccine to fight it costs about \$360, which most insurance plans likely would cover because the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control has recommended its use.

Kimberly Newman, the Saginaw County Health Department immunization nurse, says the women in Saginaw who need it most miss out on the treatment.

"That's the big issue," Newman said. "Anywhere from 12 to 30 percent of women between 9 and 26 who qualify for a vaccine are uninsured."

Gardasil blocks the most common strains of HPV, which causes 70 percent of cervical cancers and 90 percent of genital warts.

There are 1.1 million Michigan residents without health insurance, and public health officials estimate 20 percent of Saginaw County residents -- about 40,000 people -- have little or no health insurance coverage.

In Lansing, an effort to encourage girls to get vaccinated against the virus has rekindled in the Legislature.

Two Democratic state House members have introduced bills aimed at increasing use of the vaccine. Democratic and Republican state senators are scheduled to discuss similar legislation.

A similar effort narrowly failed last year, but the proposal's sponsors say the issue is important enough to warrant another attempt.

"Suffering with cervical cancer is a slow, agonizing process," said Rep. Brenda Clack, a Flint Democrat and one of the legislation's main sponsors. "I wouldn't wish it on anyone. We need to be proactive to prevent it."

A task force that Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm established reported earlier this month that Michigan could reduce the number of cervical cancer deaths with efforts including education and the vaccine. The Food and Drug Administration approved the vaccine last year, saying girls as young as 9 could receive it.

Doctors will discover that about 11,150 women nationwide have cervical cancer this year, the American Cancer Society estimates, and 3,670 will die.

"A series of three doses is considered lifetime protection," Newman said, "although it's relatively new, so they will determine that (better) as more and more women get it."

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan spokeswoman Helen Stojic said the health insurance provider includes Gardasil in vaccination coverage. Whether employers include that package in their plans is up to them.

"Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan covers that vaccine for employer groups that have immunization coverage," Stojic said. "Large self-insured customers, about half our business, customize their coverage."

She said the Blue Care Network HMO in Saginaw, which Blue Cross owns, also offers coverage.

Legislation that would have required sixth-grade girls to get the vaccine in Michigan passed the Senate by a wide margin last year but failed narrowly in the House.

Primary sponsors of this year's legislation are Clack and Rep. Mark Meadows, an East Lansing Democrat, in the House. In the Senate, they include Sen. Deb Cherry, a Burton Democrat, and Sen. Tony Stamas, a Midland Republican.

Meadows' bill would require that parents of girls entering sixth grade indicate whether the child has received the vaccine. Parents would turn in a statement from a doctor saying the child received the vaccine, or a statement from themselves saying they opted against the vaccination.

In either case, the statement would acknowledge that parents received information on the connection between HPV and cervical cancer.

Clack's bill also would require state health officials to send information about the virus and cervical cancer to school districts.

In the Senate, Cherry's bill would make the vaccine mandatory, although families could "opt out" of the requirement.

Newman said the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners will determine a cost for Gardasil before the Department of Public Health can administer the vaccine.

"We're hoping by the end of March," she said, although some private practices already have begun offering the vaccine.

Saginaw Township's Dr. Michael Schultz began dispensing it last August, said Bonnie L. Hartwick, a registered nurse at the practice, 3400 N. Center.

"I don't think the insurance companies are necessarily shying away from it," Hartwick said. "When a new vaccine comes out, once the insurance sees the need and reception from the public, they're pressured to cover it."

She said she's not aware that any of Schultz's patients have had to pay out of pocket. v

Michael Greenlee is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9682.

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State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913  
PH (517) 373.1760 | FAX (517) 373.3487  
[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/kahn/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/kahn/)

For Immediate Release  
Jan. 29, 2007

Contact: Matt Muxlow  
517-373-1760

## **Sen. Kahn eager to address state's health care needs after meeting with national health secretary**

**LANSING**—State Sen. Roger Kahn, Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop and other senators met today with U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt in a meeting at the Michigan Capitol to discuss the administration's health care proposal, first presented at last Tuesday's State of the Union address.

Kahn and Bishop also shared their vision for health care in the state, including accessible and affordable coverage, quality care, and a health care safety net.

"Today's meeting with Secretary Leavitt provides a springboard for the continuing work of the Community Health subcommittee," said Kahn, R-Saginaw, chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health. "One of my goals is to find a way to provide health coverage for those who are currently uninsured or underinsured. The administration agrees that public-private partnerships are an effective way to tackle this problem.

"In a similar vein, my colleagues in the Senate and I are committed to providing a health care safety net, thus ensuring that no citizen is forgotten. I am looking forward to working with Secretary Leavitt and the administration to enact measures that will make affordable, quality health care a reality for all of us."

Bishop said Kahn's work on health care is vital to the state.

"Senator Kahn has demonstrated a serious dedication to his constituents by participating in this discussion with Secretary Leavitt," said Bishop. "I look forward to working with him as we develop legislation that will turn Michigan around."

**A photo of Sen. Kahn meeting with Secretary Leavitt is available at:**

**[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Kahn/Kahn.htm](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Kahn/Kahn.htm)**

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## Tough times for charitable health care service in U.P. Too few able to pay for help

By KURT HAUGLIE, DMG Writer

HOUGHTON — The crisis over funding health care in the United States affects not only individuals, but also private agencies which serve the public, such as Catholic Charities of the Upper Peninsula.

Laurence Ziomkowski, executive director of CCUP in Marquette, said the Ironwood office of the organization will close at the end of February due to a funding shortfall.

"The most significant reason (for the closure) is the change in our fee revenue over the last year, year and a half," he said.

Employment in the Ironwood area has dropped significantly recently, Ziomkowski said. Two of the larger employers are health care and the plastics industry.

"The employment base is dwindling there," he said.

Because of that, Ziomkowski said the people who usually use the organization's services may no longer be able to pay for them.

"When people don't work, they don't have health insurance," he said.

Last year, the Ironwood office served more than 330 clients.

Traditionally, Ziomkowski said one third of the CCUP clients weren't able to pay for services and two thirds could pay for services. In the last year and a half, that ratio has flipped.

Although most people who use the organization's services pay with insurance, Ziomkowski said some pay in cash using a sliding pay scale.

The CCUP gets some funding from the United Way, the Marquette Diocese and private donations, but Ziomkowski that money can't fill the gap caused by lost insurance payments.

"That no longer keeps up with the people coming into our office who can't pay (for services)," he said.

The CCUP offers mental health services including marriage, gambling, substance abuse, grief and crisis pregnancy counseling.

Ziomkowski said the CCUP will keep open its other offices in Escanaba, Iron Mountain, Iron River, Marquette, Sault Ste. Marie and Houghton.

"We aren't anticipating closing the Houghton office," he said. "We have a long waiting list at all of our offices."

Ziomkowski said the CCUP staff will try to find alternate care for its clients who use the Ironwood office.

"We're referring them to other offices to the extent they're available and (clients) can get to them," he said.

Ziomkowski said although Gov. Jennifer Granholm is intending to make changes in the way health care is funded in Michigan, it won't help the Ironwood office.

"It's not something that's going to happen in a few months or year or two," he said.

The problems with CCUP are indicative of what's happening generally in the country has far as funding medical coverage is concerned, Ziomkowski said.

"We have to come to grips as a nation with how we handle health care," he said.

Kurt Hauglie can be reached **[atkhauglie@mininggazette.com](mailto:atkhauglie@mininggazette.com)**

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Shining some light on the hidden homeless

*Monday, January 29, 2007 9:39 AM EST*

**Monday, Jan. 29, 2007**

The stereotype of homeless people has them pushing shopping carts around full of their belongings and sleeping on grates where steam warms them or under the shelter of bridges.

The reality is more complicated - especially in a rural area, where the precariously sheltered might be seeking refuge in a barn or in tents when weather is warmer.

Mostly they double up with friends or relatives and stay where they can until the landlord gets wise.

That's the kind of homelessness seen in Cass County.

So the spaghetti-serving soup kitchen sponsored at Dowagiac's Second Baptist Church Jan. 25 seems like a practical solution.

The numbers served on this snowy Thursday were not large, but in many cases those who stopped in carried valuable information to friends who might need help, but were reluctant to stop in.

Actually reaching out to homeless people by the agencies who serve them has got to be preferable to a bunch of social workers thumbing through their case files.

Not only can it be intimidating to go into the state Department of Human Services (DHS) office in Cassopolis, but for many transportation remains a hurdle.

Cass can seem a lot farther than eight miles away if you don't have a reliable vehicle or can't afford gas.

"It's amazing how many people we've seen today who ... didn't have a way to get there," said Margaret Shultz, DHS community resources coordinator.

Another successful aspect of the soup kitchen was seeing the various agencies collaborating from DHS to the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency.

The state may not be able to immediately quantify the effectiveness of \$1,000 grants by which it seeded this year's homeless count, but if the bridges built in a place with as little bureaucracy as Cass County continue, it will be money well spent.

For the agencies, getting out of the office and into the field not only means a more accurate count, but their presence helps restore a sense of community to an isolated population.

If they had families to take them in, they probably wouldn't be homeless.

DHS seems to realize how valuable such connecting steps could prove.

"We could be a lot more friendly sometimes at the agencies," Shultz said.

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Early education to see a boost

By LIZ SHEPARD, Argus-Press Staff Writer

*Tuesday, January 30, 2007 8:14 PM EST*

CORUNNA - Shiawassee County's youngest residents and their families will see a boost in education and development services as the Shiawassee Regional Education Service District accepted a \$120,000 grant Monday morning.

Shiawassee County was chosen as one of 21 programs to become part of the state's Great Start Collaborative. The county was chosen for the grant by the Michigan Department of Human Services and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation.

"That \$120,000 funds engaging parents and assessing and trying to enhance the service delivery system and strategy so we can identify the difficulties facing children and how we can organize resources," said SRESA Assistant Superintendent Don Trap.

The county's early childhood program, Shiawassee ABC, will now be known as Great Start Shiawassee, changing it from a countywide collaborative to a member of the statewide program.

Trap said the state program will allow the county to develop a more coordinated early childhood service and create support for the families of children from birth to 5 years old.

"We know that brain development is really important and it happens during the zero to 5 years of age," said Great Start Shiawassee Coordinator Lori Noyer. "(Early education) is the foundation for school success."

The collaborative coordinates all community entities that work with children and families, making the resources more available to county residents.

"Often the services are overlapped and as a result of the collaborative, you can maximize not only the services that are delivered, but the expertise," said SRESA Superintendent John Hagel.

ECIC Chief Operating Officer Mike Foley said Shiawassee will be asked to complete three steps, starting with a community assessment which is planned to be completed by Oct. 1. The second step will be to look at infrastructure of the program and begin coming up with a strategy to fill in the missing program pieces, while the third step is to implement the plan.

"Our purpose and function is to create togetherness," said Trap. "We tend to develop services and give them to people - in this experience we are trying to engage parents and make them a co-producer in the services and in how they are provided."

Hagel said the SRESA is continuing its support of early childhood development, although the department will be moved into the North Street Professional Building in Owosso which was purchased in late December. Other offices within the SRESA will also be joining it.



Argus-Press Photo/Liz Shepard  
SHIAWASSEE COUNTY joined the state's Great Start collaborative after receiving a \$120,000 grant from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation Monday. Shiawassee Regional Education

Service District Superintendent John Hagel, center, accepted the check and was joined by, from the left, State Rep. Dick Ball, ECIC Chief Operating Officer Mile Foley, Michigan Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow, SRESA Assistant Superintendent Don Trap, Great Start Shiawassee Coordinator Lori Noyer and Great Start Shiawassee Chairman Tom Cook. Shiawassee preschoolers were also brought to celebrate the grant by Jill Shorkey, director of Children's Services at the Shiawassee Street School.



## **Home Heating Credits Being Processed**

MIRS, January 30, 2007

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) today announced the Department of Treasury has begun processing Michigan Home Heating Credits for the 2006 tax year. The credit assists low-income customers with winter energy bills.

Forms and instructional materials are available on the Internet at: [www.michigan.gov/incometax](http://www.michigan.gov/incometax) or by calling 1-800-827-4000.

01/30/2007



Record-Eagle/Tyler Sipe

**Kathryn Holl affectionately rubs the head of Travis Juan Holl at their home in Traverse City.**

## Hoping For Grace

### *TC couple want to adopt girl from Guatemala*

BY VANESSA MCCRAY

[vmccray@record-eagle.com](mailto:vmccray@record-eagle.com)

TRAVERSE CITY — Kathryn Holl will travel to Guatemala to celebrate the first birthday of baby Grace.

She plans to leave today, but doesn't know if she'll return to Traverse City with a daughter.

Kathryn and Steven Holl knew about the Guatemalan girl before she was born, named her Grace Helene and want to adopt her. But a long delay in the process, in a country where adoptions are contentious and ever-changing, means the Holls are full of uncertainty.

"What I am sitting here, hoping ... is that the phone rings," said Kathryn, a few days before her planned departure.

She hopes for a repeat of an extraordinary event that occurred in 2004, when the Holls adopted Grace's big brother Travis Juan, now 3½-years-old.

For that, they can thank a timely garage sale.



Record-Eagle/Tyler Sipe

**Kathryn Holl embraces 3-year-old adopted son Travis Juan Holl as he holds a picture of his 1-year-old biological sister, Grace Helene, who remains in Guatemala.**

### **Travis' trip**

If destiny would have it, the Holls were ready.

The couple began to talk about adoption in 2002 and zeroed in on Guatemala. They selected an agency and were warned that adoptions may cease due to changes in the system. The Holls pressed on and by spring 2003 their paperwork was complete.

But the country stopped adoptions and all was uncertain.

That summer, Kathryn held a garage sale at her mother's Torch Lake house. It's an isolated spot, off a two-track road. A yellow car pulled up, and three women got out. Kathryn noted an accent. She inquired and discovered one was a visiting Guatemalan adoption attorney. The Holls' story tumbled out.

The attorney told Kathryn about a little boy, relinquished by his birth mother, who was under the foster care of the attorney's daughter.

"All I had is this incredible feeling," Kathryn said.

The Holls began to work with the attorney on an adoption of the boy without an agency. The scene in Guatemala shifted again, allowing adoptions, and the tot was welcomed into the Holl family in March 2004.

Kathryn, a college Spanish major, at first spoke only that language to her son.

On a recent afternoon, the energetic boy scurried about the kitchen, rearranging chairs.

"I'm making a cave," Travis announced.

There's a spark about him, as he trotted back a bit later, and triumphantly brandished a candy cane.

Kathryn said her trips to Guatemala made her feel privileged.

"A little boy like Travis would probably be shining shoes," she said.

It was an e-mail that next changed their lives. The Guatemalan attorney, now a close friend, wrote. Travis' birth mother was pregnant, did the Holls wish to adopt again?

"We decided that it would be a most wonderful thing for Travis to have his sister grow up with him," Kathryn said.

But Grace's adoption has proven as trying as Travis'.

### **A contentious system**

Guatemala, known for its Mayan culture and mountainous, coastal terrain, increasingly is popular as an adoption destination.

Americans adopted 4,135 Guatemalan children in fiscal 2006, according to the U.S. Department of State. That places the Central American country second only to China in international adoptions.

But some say the system is severely lacking.

"When you look at Guatemala from a policy standpoint ... the problems are huge," said Trish Maskew, president of Ethica, a Maryland adoption policy nonprofit.

There's uncertainty about the future as the U.S. and Guatemala sort out standards set forth in the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions. The treaty aims to ensure ethical adoptions and prevent the trafficking of children.

Allegations of abuses in Guatemala include paying and coercing birth mothers, Maskew said.

"There is certainly potential for abuse, whether it's ever happened or not," said Marshall Williams of the Gladney Center for Adoption in Texas. "Adopting Hague procedures will take away that potential."

Kathryn's heard concerns about the country's system, and thinks it should be assessed. The treaty is "a good thing," but she also wonders who will care for the children if things change greatly.

Guatemalan mothers sign off four times during the process and DNA testing is required, she said.

"Now, hopefully, it's legitimate," Kathryn said.

Guatemala entered the treaty in 2003, but its procedures do not comply.

The country's complicated history since then included a court battle and a period when adoptions stopped and then resumed.

The U.S. is in the final stages of treaty implementation and, upon completion, must follow its standards, Williams said.

"United States is putting pressure on Guatemala to change their laws now," said Bruce Mossburg, of the Grand Rapids-based Bethany Christian Services.

Williams expects only a "very small chance" adoptions could stop because of treaty maneuvers. Even then, he said, prospective parents with paperwork under way would be allowed by the U.S. to complete the adoption.

### **Adopting Grace**

The Holls thought they would celebrate Christmas with their new daughter.

The holiday has long passed. Grace remains in foster care in a small village near Guatemala City. The Holls are stuck in what they call a "black hole" of bureaucracy.

In February 2006, the Holls began the adoption process. Again, they chose to work directly with the attorney they met by chance a few years before.

In August, they saw Grace. Kathryn found her to be "quiet and easygoing." The Holls returned to Traverse City to wait.

Months later, they still don't know when the adoption will be complete.

Grace's case has been tied up for more than 20 weeks in an approval process overseen by a Guatemalan government agency. The review is expected to take six to eight weeks, Kathryn said.

The Holls do not know the exact reasons for the delay, but had to resubmit the case multiple times.

Adoption experts do not think the delay is related to anticipated changes to adoption laws. Instead, Williams said, the large volume of requests slowed the process.

Kathryn plans to leave today for Guatemala, where she will spend at least two weeks with Grace and celebrate her first birthday. She hopes there's a way to bring her home.

The pig-tailed girl in a photograph has grown so much since the Holls first learned of her.

"How do you explain to her brother that your sister can't come here," Kathryn said.

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